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Speech by Her Royal Highness Princess Irene van Lippe-Biesterfeld at the opening of Wild Wonders Europe, May 27, 2010, Den Haag

As patroness to the Year of Biodiversity I would like to take this opportunity offered me by the opening of the exhibition Wild Wonders of Europe, with its wonderful images of nature, to explore with you the meaning of the international Year of Biodiversity.

Why?

Because nature, through these photographs, demands our attention, love and solidarity. Nature that we are irreversibly damaging and exploiting. We live in the misunderstanding that it is all ours. The reality is that we are a part of nature, we actual

Is it not first and foremost our duty to ensure the recovery of the Ecological Framework (de Ecologische Hoofdstructuur), the backbone of Dutch nature and landscape, in order to maintain the biodiversity in our country?

Let us be inspired to follow the example of those people and companies that *do* think of the well-being of all life on earth.

Take Natura 2000, the European Ecological Network. For the first time in human history we have constructed green corridors that connect nature areas to each other, so that animals and plants can freely migrate and disperse. It is a Dutch invention which we can be very proud of, but which we seem to give less priority in our own country.

My thoughts turn to the international study "The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB)". It is a major international initiative to draw attention to the global economic benefits of biodiversity, to highlight the growing costs of *biodiversity loss* and